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ABSTRACT

The purposes of evaluation are to improve instruction and to make administrative decisions about teacher retention and placement. The administrative reasons for evaluation are overshadowed by the charge to improve instruction, which in turn improves student learning. Teachers who have negative or neutral attitudes toward evaluation are less likely to profit from evaluation than teachers who have a favorable attitude toward evaluation. The interaction between teachers and supervisors, the knowledge of the criterion to be used in evaluation, the frequency of evaluation, and the awareness of motivational factors are key elements in the development of teacher attitudes toward evaluation. Teacher attitudes toward evaluation significantly affect the impact evaluation has on improvement of instruction. (SI)

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TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of evaluation was the improvement of instruction and to make administrative decisions about teacher retention and placement. The administrative reasons for evaluation, although important, were over shadowed by the charge to improve instruction which in turn would improve student learning. Teachers who had negative or neutral attitudes toward evaluation were less likely to profit from evaluation than were teachers who had a favorable attitude toward evaluation. The interaction between teachers and supervisor, the knowledge of criterion to be used in evaluation, the frequency of evaluation, and the awareness of motivational factors were key elements in the developing teacher attitudes toward evaluation.

TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD EVALUATION

"The attitude of teachers toward evaluation of their teaching performance will in some way influence their capability to profit from evaluation, those who hold favorable attitudes are more likely to benefit than those holding less favorable or unfavorable attitudes." (Wagoner & O'Hanlon, 1986 p. 471). The term evaluation as used in this discussion included both formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation, often referred to as supervision of instruction (Burk & Krey, 1985) designed to facilitate the developmental process of directing, guiding, and supporting the instructional behavior of teachers for the improvement of instruction (e.g. Cooper, 1984; Wagoner & O'Hanlon, 1986; McCarty, Kaufman, & Stafford, 1986). Summative evaluations were designed to make constructive criticism, assign a ranking to the teacher's performance and to identify a teacher's strengths and weaknesses (e.g. Cooper, 1984; Wagoner & O'Hanlon, 1986; McCarty, Kaufman, & Stafford, 1986).

Formative evaluation and summative evaluation are consistent with educational practices. Current literature suggests that teacher evaluation has two main purposes: administrative purposes and the improvement of instruction. Glass reported that most teachers recognize self-growth and accountability as the purpose for teacher evaluation (Jensen, 1981). Zahorich (1980) expands on these purposes, suggesting that administrative purposes are of lesser importance than improvement of instruction. "Teachers are evaluated in an effort to

improve their teaching and subsequently students' learning and they are evaluated to make administrative decisions about teacher retention, assignment and merit pay. Observation of teaching is more important for instructional purposes than it is for administrative purposes" (Zahoric, 1980 p.51).

Traditionally most supervisors have been expected to perform both formative and summative evaluations. That is, they were called upon to help teachers perform to the fullest of their abilities and to decide or help others decide when teachers should be continued or terminated. "The principal who tries to help the beginning teacher perform successfully and make a recommendation about whether to continue the teacher's contract is an example of a supervisor caught between the rock of supporting and the hard spot of passing judgement on teachers" (Cooper, 1984, p. 149).

Cooper also analyzes the dual role of supervisors. "Supervisors, like teachers, are often expected both to support people and to make hard decisions about competence" (Cooper, 1984 p. 150). It is unlikely that these expectations will change anytime in the near future, particularly if funding for educational programs continues its downward trend. School systems, colleges and universities appear unable to create new supervisory positions that would enable different people to assume responsibilities of supporting teachers and of making personnel decisions. What this means is that in most situations supervisors cannot trade away their responsibilities for making summative decisions in hopes of winning the trust of those with whom they work; they must learn instead to take on both sets of responsibilities. "In short, supervisors must learn how to function like those good teachers they encounter -- those who support people and, in the end, make reasonable and fair decisions about competence" (Cooper, 1984, p. 150). The dual role of the principal seemed to be in conflict: one of helping (formative evaluation) and one of judging (summative evaluation).

It had been speculated by numerous researchers that teachers would have a positive attitude toward formative evaluation and negative attitude toward summative evaluation. However, teachers' attitudes toward summative and formative evaluation were found to be very similar. Evaluation of teachers who perceived evaluations in a negative or neutral way had little positive effect on improvement of instructions, while at the same time creating teacher stress and an antagonistic relationship between teachers and administrators (e.g.

Darling, Wise, & Pease, 1983; Blumberg, 1980; McCarty, Kaufman & Stafford, 1986; Wagoner & O'Hanlon, 1986; Kauchak, 1984; Rothberg & Buchanan, 1981). "Principal visits were seen for the most part as prefuntory, designed more to maintain status quo" (Kauchak, 1984, p. 3) and met administrative requirements or needs than to improve instruction or evaluate. Stated as typical responses to inquiries of teachers regarding teacher attitudes toward evaluation were: "Because she has to fill out her forms for her immediate supervisors" (Kauchak, 1984, p.3). "Eighty-two percent of the teachers surveyed felt there was a definite need for supervision and evaluation in schools, but seventy percent indicated that supervisors are often perceived as potentially dangerous" (Heichberger & Young, 1975, p.210). Teachers viewed supervision as an intrusion and "the last thing they may want is for supervisors or another person to get in their way by trying to be helpful" (Cooper, 1984, p. 150). Other comments stated as a typical response to evaluation were "principals like the Hunter system because it gives them security. Teachers have to buy into the system it has sex appeal, and it has a scientific aura about it. I can survive Hunter like I have modular scheduling and open classrooms" (McCarty, Kaufman & Stafford, 1986, p. 252). "I could care less what the principal says. He doesn't spend enough time in my classroom to know what's going on" (McCarty, Kaufman & Stafford, 1986, p. 252). Supervisors and teachers recognized that the process of evaluation was a threatening experience for teachers. "One of the reasons supervision is a neglected task is that principals are well aware that teachers may become anxious and unhappy at the prospect of being supervised" (Heichberger & Young, 1975, p. 210).

When teachers were questioned regarding the effect that evaluations had on their teaching performance few could articulate anything, in fact they seemed to grope for examples, not wishing to appear disloyal to their supervisors. The impression conveyed was that teachers recognize that principals have the right to evaluate their performance, but they question principal's competence to do it. Frequently, the underlying discomfort appeared related to the principal's leadership style (McCarthy, Kaufman & Stafford, 1986). Supervisor's leadership styles seemed to effect not only the anxiety level of teachers, but it also tended to significantly effect the relationship between the supervisor and teachers and the credibility the teacher placed on the evaluation. These statements coupled with

the yet undisputed 1972 findings of Mosher and Purpel that "...there is virtually no research to suggest that the supervision of teaching, however defined or undertaken, makes any difference" (Gool, 1980). Mosher and Purpel (1972) findings were affirmed more recently by studies conducted by Darling, Wise, & Pease (1983), and McCarty, Kaufman & Stafford (1986).

The previously quoted teachers' statements regarding their attitudes toward evaluation provide some clues to explain the negative or neutral attitudes teachers have toward evaluation. This is ironic considering the process of evaluation was designed, at least in theory, to assist teachers to be better at their chosen profession and to ensure competency of teachers. The issue of teacher competence actually affects a very small percentage, approximately two percent of practicing teachers (McGreal, 1983). In addition to not being effective, most teachers either have tenure or are under master contracts that require "just cause" standards for disciplining teachers and for termination of teacher employment. The exception is beginning teachers who may have had a probationary status. Tenured teachers and those protected by just cause must be appraised of specific deficiencies and sufficient time and appropriate assistance in overcoming these deficiencies are guaranteed if the reason for dismissal or discipline are related to teacher competence (Howsam, 1963). The largest percentage of teachers were evaluated for the purpose of improvement of instruction.

"Only the teacher or group of teachers that fall at the lowest end of the continuum will likely even be significantly affected by the supervisor's judgement. Since they can be identified by methods other than those built into the evaluation procedure, it seems impractical to build a system around that two percent or less of a staff. However, the argument to design an evaluation system around the needs of the great majority of the staff gains additional credence. (McGreal, 1983).

Consistent with this argument was the expressed desire of teachers to have a helping or collegial relationship with their supervisor. When asked to select the kind of relationship teachers would like to have with their supervisor, sixty-two percent of the teachers wanted a helping relationship, thirty-six percent desired a collegial relationship. Only one percent selected an evaluator or rater relationship (Heichberger & Young, 1975). Even though the evaluation system was required to address the issue of competence, the primary

purpose of evaluation needed to focus on improvement of instruction. These two functions of evaluation were required to work together as one system of evaluation. McGreal (1983) suggests that the legal system together with the evaluation system can insure both functions of evaluation are realized. Based on a number of reviews of teacher dismissal and nonrenewal cases it seemed reasonable to assume that from a legal perspective local evaluation systems, master contracts, state statutes, and constitutional provided safeguards for the protections of all teachers. "But it should be made clear that the evaluation system can provide these protections and still be made clear and still be built with primary focus on the improvement of instructions (McGreal, 1983)." Teacher evaluation systems needed to reflect the philosophy that: Teachers would be seen as professionals with the autonomy that the title assumes. For unless teachers are viewed as individuals capable of diagnosing the learning needs of students and able to make judgements about appropriate learning strategies and tactics, their competence is challenged. Some will mistakenly interpret this to mean that teachers should be left alone, which is almost impossible given the current emphasis on close supervision. Rather, teachers should be dignified with more respect, better supervision, more contact with their counterparts, and not to be forgotten, praise when it is deserved (McCarty, Kaufman, & Stafford, 1986). This philosophy needed to be in place for the teachers to develop positive rather than negative or neutral attitudes toward teacher evaluation.

Negative or neutral attitudes that teachers expressed toward evaluation were classified into four categories.

- 1) Not knowing the evaluation criterion reflected in teacher behaviors that were expected prior to their evaluation. This created an uncertainty and anxiety for teachers (e.g. Bochen, 1979; Herman, 1973; Wise, 1984; Howsam, 1963; McGreal, 1983; Bell, 1984).

- 2) The infrequency of observations by the evaluator and limited feedback provided to teachers from their supervisor regarding their teacher performance (Darling, Wise, & Pease, 1983; Burke & Krey, 1985; Kauchak, 1984; Jonas & Blumberg, 1986; Crowley, 1986).

- 3) Evaluation systems were administrative oriented with high-direct, low-indirect interaction between supervisor and teacher. An interaction model that did not support teaching as a worthy professional capable of making decisions for improvement of instruction

(Blumberg, 1980; Jonas & Blumberg, 1986; Blumberg & Amidon, 1965; Herman, 1973; Rothberg & Buchanan, 1981; Suhor, 1987; Blumberg & Weber, 1986; Blanchard, 1987).

4) Evaluation systems concentrated on hygienic factors rather than motivational factors which would facilitate change for the improvement of instruction (Blumberg, 1980; Wagoner & O'Hanlon, 1986; Millman, 1984; Crowley, 1986; Carlson, 1987; Warriner, 1987).

SUMMARY

The purpose of evaluation was the improvement of instruction and to make administrative decisions about teacher retention and placement. The administrative reasons for evaluation, although important, were overshadowed by the charge to improve instruction which in turn would improve student learning. Teachers who had negative or neutral attitudes toward evaluation were less likely to profit from evaluation than were teachers who had a favorable attitude toward evaluation. The interaction between teachers and supervisors, the knowledge of criterion to be used in evaluation, the frequency of evaluation, and the awareness of motivational factors were key elements in the development of teacher attitudes toward evaluation. Teacher attitudes toward evaluation significantly affected the impact evaluation had on improvement of instruction.

Improvement of instruction was contingent upon evaluators recognizing the need of teachers to be dignified with more respect, treated as professionals capable of making decisions for the improvement of instruction, more frequent and better evaluation, and praise not be forgotten when it is deserved (McCarty, Kaufman & Stafford, 1986).